

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 422

By Thomas Thoresen, President of the Association of Retired Conservationists and
President of the Board of The Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters
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Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations. I am Thomas Thoresen and am here today to register my support as well as the support of two separate conservation organizations asking that you pass Senate Bill 422, ensuring timely appointments to the DNR Board. The two organizations I am here representing today are the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters and the Association of Retired Conservationists. I have been an avid hunter and angler for over 40 years. I retired in 2005 as the Deputy Chief Conservation Warden after 30 years of State Service. During my 26 years at DNR, I saw many of the Natural Resources Board actions first hand.

We need to pass Senate bill 422 for several reasons. 1). Ensuring timely appointments to the Natural Resources Board and 2). Passage will help restore the proud tradition of natural resource protection and integrity of state government.

Citizens of this state clearly want a Natural Resources Board dedicated to sound conservation practices and citizen input in setting natural resource policy for Wisconsin. Unfortunately, and especially since Tommy Thompson made DNR Secy. a cabinet position in the budget in 1995, partisan politics has come to play on Natural Resource Board appointments and confirmation votes in the State Senate. This partisanship has occurred by both political parties, is upsetting to conservationists and clearly unfair to those appointees who languish with no vote on their confirmation up or down to the Natural Resources Board.

Seeing this, conservationists voted statewide at the Conservation Congress Spring Hearings with over 90% of the vote to have a Senate vote on appointees within 6 months of appointment. Timely appointment of NR Board members, the Board appointed DNR Secretary, and the protection of segregated hunting and fishing funds found in AJR 34 are key components of the Hunter, Trapper and Angler Bill of Rights. This was selected by the consortium of conservation groups to be one of the 4 Conservation Priorities for this legislative session. I'm sure despite the rough weather a couple of weeks ago, constituents came to your office to express the need to get this passed.

I mentioned passage of Senate Bill 422 would be a step in restoring Wisconsin's proud tradition of natural resource protection and integrity in state government. Since our natural resources belong to all of us, Wisconsin citizens want our resources and policies to be held in trust for us and future generations. When NRB or other appointments are not voted on, citizens find partisanship in natural resource management distasteful. Citizens want long term thinking with continuity in Natural Resource management. Wisconsin

citizens want the closest thing to knowledgeable, professional, civil service like management of the DNR.

I'd like to use a Conservation Commission Chart from 1968 given to me by my uncle who work for the Wisconsin Conservation Commission and Department of Natural Resources from 1934 to 1974. This chart shows the Conservation Commission/Board members from 1927 to 1968. If you truly study this chart, it helps you understand why so many Wisconsin citizens and especially hunters and anglers feel passionate about all the components of the Hunter, Trapper, and Angler Bill of Rights.

(Show chart and why it is important both for what happened in conservation and the people appointed).

I urge passage of SB 422 and all components of the Hunter, Trapper and Angler Bill of Rights.

Thank you.